1988/89

Annual Report

SCN Saskatchewan Communications Network

90-07376/

Letter of Transmittal

To Her Honour
The Honourable Sylvia O. Fedoruk, O.C., S.O.M.
Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan

Your Honour:

I have the honour to submit the first Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Communications Advanced Network for the year ending March 31, 1989. As this new Corporation develops it will become an intregal part of the province's delivery system for distance education.

I have the honour to be
Your obedient servant,

J. Gary Lane, Q.C.
Minister Responsible
Saskatchewan Communications
Advanced Network

Formation of the Corporation

On January 8, 1989 the SCAN Corporation was formed by Order-in-Council under the Crown Corporation's Act.

The founding board of this new corporation is composed of J. Gary Lane (Chairman), Eric Berntson, Ray Meiklejohn, Lorne Hepworth, and Neal Hardy.

The formation of this corporation represents the culmination of five years of public hearings and debates on the need for an advanced communications network in the province. This process was begun by the release of a White Paper in 1984. This White Paper called for public input on the potential for the "creation of an Advanced telecommunications network which would greatly enhance the exchange of information throughout the province in areas such as education, agriculture, technical training, skills upgrading, culture and the arts."

The resultant public hearings, chaired by Mr. Wayne Kyle, Superintendent of Instruction for Saskatoon East School Division, clearly supported the establishment of such a network. The over 121 submissions made to this hearing committee recommended that the new Corporation "encourage, facilitate and coordinate the use of communications technology in Saskatchewan in order to enhance the development and delivery of educational, informational and cultural programs for the improvement of human and economic resources".

The newly created Corporation has heeded the recommendations of these public hearings taking as its mandate the provision of equal access to information for all Saskatchewan residents.

Equality of Opportunity

The combination of a dispersed population, rural outmigration, and population aging has resulted in higher per capita costs of providing eessential community services including information services such as education, business and government services. Many smaller locations can no longer receive face to face informational programming in a cost effective manner.

Increasing delivery costs has meant the gradual withdrawal or centralization of various services. Presently urban residents have greater access to a range of information/education sources than do many rural communities. Access to information is becoming more and more critical for opening new opportunities and improving life quality. The application of new information technologies provides both an alternative to expensive face to face delivery methodologies and an opportunity for greater dissemination of information than ever before.

Providing a framework for potential users is the prime activity required by SCAN to effectively achieve its objectives. The first tasks to be undertaken by the corporation will be:

- to design an appropriate economical delivery system to serve the maximum number of Saskatchewan residents possible;
- to develop an administrative and financial structure which will encourage non-profit organizations, educational institutions, and business involved in industrial training to use the SCAN network;
- to attract the qualified staff necessary to operate this unique network and to ensure its focus on the expressed needs of the people of Saskatchewan.

As the network develops SCAN will begin to serve:

- students who could take credit courses, without having to leave their community to relocate in distant cities;
- kindergarten to grade 12 students, who could receive both network television programming during school days and actual courses which require expertise not available in the school itself;
- businesses and professionals who wish to consult or train electronically at a distance;
- farmers and ranchers requiring information on new techniques and methods to make them more competitive in a shrinking world economy;
- health and volunteer organizations wishing to provide their message to the widest audience possible.

SCAN will focus attention and resources on continuing to improve the quality of life for Saskatchewan people. SCAN will improve the delivery capability of existing services, provide more rural educational opportunities, as well as provide a wider variety of tools for local leaders to encourage young people to remain in rural communities and encourage more grass roots networking efforts.

Services

Initially SCAN plans to offer three inter-related networks:

- a **Narrowcast Network** which will provide one-way video and two-way audio conferencing to clients at individual SCAN Centres for credit education classes and the dissemination of information to selected target groups;
- a **Public Information Network** which will provide a range of educational and informational programming over existing cable television systems. This system will provide alternative quality programming to the residents of Saskatchewan;
- a **Data Network** which in the future may provide an alternate vehicle for the delivery of distance education courses and public information through access to existing data bases and electronic bulletin boards for both rural and urban residents.

Activities to Date

In the first three months of its operation the SCAN Corporation has concentrated its efforts upon the development of the Narrowcast system. In particular SCAN has:

- Initiated negotiations for the amalgamation of the non-profit Saskatchewan Tele-Learning Association (STELLA) organization, which had previously pioneered a number of narrowcast initiatives;
- begun to negotiate a series of contracts with Regional Colleges to maintain and to operate 35 SCAN Centres on behalf of the Corporation;
- established a system for a consistent and reliable equipment maintenance and operational base for SCAN Centres. In early 1989/90 each SCAN centre will be equipped with a satellite dish and receiver, a VCR, a 24 inch television monitor, a telephone with a speaker attachment and a facsimile machine;
- developed a centralized 24 hour, help line for technological problems in SCAN Centres throughout the province and to provide contacts for needed local maintenance for the equipment to be purchased by SCAN.
- initiated discussions with the University of Saskatchewan and SED systems of Saskatoon for the construction of a satellite uplink facility located at the University;
- contracted with SaskTel for the design of a fibre optics and microwave network which will allow for originating signals from Moose Jaw, Regina, Saskatoon and Prince Albert.

Funding and Expenditures

In 1988/89 no expenditures were made nor were revenues received by the SCAN Corporation. All activities carried out on behalf of the Corporation were accomplished by staff seconded from existing government departments. In 1988/89 the federal and provincial governments signed a five year, $18 million agreement for the ongoing financial support of the newly formed Corporation. This level of federal support will act as a supplement to provincial initiatives in this area.